nature net

The NatureKenyaNewsletter www.naturekenya.org June 03

GRASSROOTS

Spotted Ground Thrush attracts attention

With less than 2,500 individuals remaining in the warld, the Spotted Ground Thrush *Zoothera guttata* is one of Africa's most endangered birds. Populatians af this thrush migrate between African cauntries and a cancerted effart is needed ta pratect its habitat. Five races exist in what are naw anly isalated patches of indigenous forest. Twa migratory coastal races are found, one in Kenya and Tanzania, and the other in South Africa. The three sedentary races are faund in small forest fragments in Democratic Republic of Congo, Molowi, Sudan and recent unconfirmed observotions olso suggest Mozambique.

An Internationol Conservation Action Plan far this species has been set aut, recognising the importance of involving local communities and other stakeholders adjacent to Spotted Ground Thrush sites ond the potentiol ecotourism benefits. This was done at a warkshop held at Watomu in May 2003, involving sixteen NGO ond Government participonts from BirdLife International partners in South Africa, Malawi, DRC, Kenya and Tanzania. An Internatianal Spotted Ground Thrush Warking Group was also set up to co-ardinate the implementatian af the Plan.

It was jointly hosted by Nature Kenya and National Museums of Kenya (NMK), ond focilitated by Nature Uganda and BirdLife South Africa and co-funded by the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the UK Darwin Initiative.

For mare information on this initiotive contact Kariuki Ndang'ang'a at the Ornithology Dept, NMK or at kbirds@africaanline.co.ke

TALKS & VIDEOS

Running Dry

What are our sources of water for drinking water, sanitation, power generation, agriculture and industry? Are we overestimating the amount and quality of water? Come and explore the situation with this one hour 20 min video

a African Environmental Film Foundation production

Mon 9 June '03,
5:15 p.m.* Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi
(*starting earlier than usual)

Spotted Ground Thrush in the hand

FIELD TRIPS

L. Magadi Lagoons

Saturday 21 June '03

With o 7:00 o.m. early start, we head to the western lagoons of L. Magodi to do some birding. Bring o picnic lunch, hat and water.

Baok at the Nature Kenya office with 100/- by Tuesday 17 June 03.

MIDA CREEK

MANGROVE HONEY

Honey from Mida Creek and the Arabuko Sokoke Forest now available from the Nature Kenya office @ 200/- per bottle.

Unique T-shirts from the Friends of Arabuko - Sokoke Forest available @ 950/- each

By purchasing the honey or t-shirts you are helping to conserve one of the most important forests in Africa.

Succulenta trip to Tassia Lodge

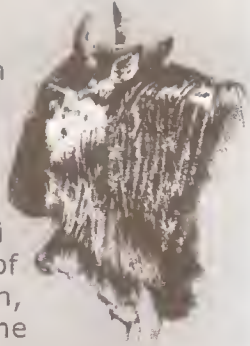
Fri 29 - Sun 31 August '03

Eco-friendly ond having greot views, Tassia Lodge will be the base for finding interesting plants and plenty of bird life.

It is six hours from Nairobi, beyond Isiala, narth of and adjacent to IL Ngwesi and Mokagodo Forest. Rates for self-catering residents are $330 per day far up ta 12 people, and $ 385 for more than 12 persans, but with a maximum af 17 permitted. There is the possibility of camping far those who miss lodge places.

Hurry with bookings, as the lodge is busy and confirmotion is needed soonest - phone Sue Allen (891190/ 890375) for booking and other details.

Trips continued on page 3



Use of an ecohydrological model to predict the impact on the Serengeti ecosystem of deforestation, irrigation and the proposed Amala weir water diversion project in Kenya

Emmanuel Gereta, Eric Wolanski, Markus Borner and Suzanne Serneels

The 25,000 km² Serengeti ecosystem includes a natianal park, game reserves, game controlled areas, Ngorongoro Canservation area and the Masai-Mara Game Reserve in Kenya. At the centre of the ecosystem is Tanzania's 14,763 km² Serengeti National Park. The Mara, Grumeti and Mbalageti Rivers, all flowing westward to Lake Victoria, drain the park. The park is listed as an UNESCO World Heritage site and is made spectacular by the annual migration of more than 1 million wildebeest and 200,000 zebras. These animals disperse inta the treeless southern grasslands of the park and the western region of the Ngorongoro conservation area during the rainy season (December through April). This area is the driest region of the park and is arid in the dry season. At the end of the wet season, these animals migrate towards the lower Grumeti River and thence to the narthern regian of the Serengeti National Park and the Masai Mara Reserve in Kenya; there they take refuge during the dry season (July ta October).

This ecosystem may be impacted by (1) deforestation in the Mau escarpment in Kenya, (2) irrigation for mechanised wheat farming in Kenya's Laita Plains, and (3) the propased Ewaso Ng'iro (South) Hydropawer Project that would divert Mara River water at the proposed Amala weir, also in Kenya. All these projects may affect the Mara River flow; the Mara River catchment is the dry weather refuge for more than one million migrating wildebeest and zebras of the Serengeti ecosystem. It may also be affected by climate change due to the increased Greenhouse effect.

An ecohydrology model was used to predict the likely impact of these developments and climate change on the Serengeti ecosystem. The model was based on observed monthly rainfall in the period 1900-2000 and

Continued on page 4

Illustration by Jonathan Scott from the *Guidebook to the Masai Mara National Reserve* available at the Nature Kenya office @ 350/-

EVENING SKY

June Sky, from The Safari Star Guide by Alex and Joy MacKay

By Ian MacKay and Fleur Ng'weno

Here on the equator, we are able to see stars and constellations of northern and southern skies. In June, the Plough (also called Ursa Major and Big Dipper) is in the north-northwest, below the bright orange star Arcturus. Meanwhile the Southern Cross (or Crux) stands upright in the south.

Look straight southeast to find the bright reddish star Antares, the eye of the scorpion, Scorpius. The body of the scorpion curves below it like a giant fishhook. Below Scorpius, Sagittarius (the Archer) is rising. Between the constellations of Sagittarius and Scorpius lies the centre of our own galaxy, the Milky Woy. On a clear, dark night, the Milky Way appears wider and denser around this area.

Planets June 2003

Bath Jupiter and Saturn are now in the west. Saturn is very low on the horizon, setting around the middle of the month. The crescent moon will be just north of Saturn on June 1st, and near bright Jupiter on June 5th.

On June 19th the moon will be **very** close to the reddish planet Mars. Venus is not visible in the evening - only in the morning just before dawn.

Moon June 2003

7 June *first quarter* (overhead at sunset); 14 June *full moon*; 21 June *last quarter* (rises at midnight), 29 June *new moon*.

Starwatching, a southern hemisphere guide to the galaxy available from the Nature Kenya office @ 900/-

Also *The Safari Star Guide* by Alex and Joy Mackay available @ 400/-

CLASSIFIEDS

CONCERT

Nairobi Music Society Choir, Nairobi Orchestra, Young Musicians' Competition Winners

Classical programme includes Puccini's Messa di Gloria
Saturday 21 June 6 pm,
National Theatre
Admission Ksh 300,
students/children Ksh 50

Reach over 1000 members by advertising in Nature Net
Rates for Classifieds: • Up to 25 words 250/- • Up to 50 words 500/- Ads • 1/4 page @ 1750/- • 1/2 page @ 3000/- with image +500/-

Safaricom Marathon 2003
Saturday 28 June 2003
The only marathon in the world run inside a game reserve
'One of the 10 races of your life'
Runners World Jan 2003
Sponsored by Safaricom

Viking House
Best of Kenya
Unique Gift Centre
Purchase Honey and other products from Kenyan Communities
Nature Kenya Point of Sale
For further information call 4449244/5 Fax 4449246
Email: VikingLtd@mitsuminet.com

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

BIRD RINGING

Meet ot the Museums' Noirobi Botanic Gorden, ot 7:00 a.m. every Thursdoy.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet ot the Notionol Museum, Noirobi cor pork ot 9:00 a.m. the third Sundoy of every month, **i.e. 15 June**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALK

Guided Tree Wolks in the Arboretum on the second Soturday and last Mondoy, i.e. **14 & 30 June from 9:30 a.m**. Meet ot the Arboretum gote. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gote.*

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks ot sites in ond oround Noirobi. Meet ot the Notionol Museum cor pork every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Soturdoy birdwotch with the Arobuko Sokoke Forest Guides Associotion is on the first Saturday of eoch month i.e. **7 June, at 6:30 a.m**. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwolks are held the third Soturday of each month, i.e. **21 June** Pleose call Morlene Reid on (011) 491 648 to confirm

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuory Trust Noture wolks are held on the first ond third Soturdoys of the month i.e. **7 & 21 June, at 9:00 a.m**. Meet at the stairs leoding to the Restourant at the Rocecourse.

* NEW - Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group ond orgonise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 035 42952 or email wck@vicweb.net

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of ony of its staff, volunteers or members orgonising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or domoge to property.

Bird Hotline
3749957

Southern Hyliota *Udo's Camp, Kakamega Forest/ Apr* Shailesh Patel, Douglas Gachucha, Francis Muigai

Mouse-coloured Sunbird (ringed), Little Sparrowhawk (ringed) *Mwamba Bird Observatory, Watamu* **Heuglin's Gull**, *Sabaki River Mouth* **Brown Booby (ringed)** *Watamu/ Apr* Nairobi Ringing Group

African White-winged Dove, *West of Rhamu Town, Close to Daua River/ Feb* Anne Powys, Gilfrid Powys

Mammal sighted

Two Bushpig *Potamochoerus porcus* feeding on edge of forest at 6.30 a.m. Sunday morning (4-May-03) / Peponi Rd., below Kitisuru turnoff Dino Martins

Global Summit on Medicinal Plants

September 25th to 30th 2003
Mauritius

Main theme of the Conference is *'Recent Trends in Cultivation, Conservation, Phytomedicine and Other Alternative Therapies for Human Welfare'.*

To attend / present paper contact
35, 3rd Cross, Vignannagar,
Malleshpalaya, Bangalore-560 075
INDIA
Fax: +91 80 5244592, 3219295,
Email: cenfound@sparrl.com or
cenfound@yahoo.co.uk
Web: www.cenfound.org/global/global.html

Kenya Birds
Volume 10 has been sent out with this issue of *Nature net.*
If you do not wish to continue to receive this publication please notify the office.

JUNE DIARY

Sot 7	ASF Birdwolks & NRF wolk
Mon 9	Running Dry Video
Sot 14	Tree Wolk
Sun 15	Sundoy Birdwolk
Sot 21	NRF wolk & L. Mogodi trip
Mon 30	Tree Wolk
Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning	
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning	

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

NGONG FOREST SANCTUARY

SPONSOR A FENCE POST (@ KSH 2500)

The vision of the Ngong Forest Santuary Trust is to protect the forest's natural environment through wise conservation management and to create a self sustaining and multi-functional reserve, which will serve the social, educational and economic needs of the surrounding community.

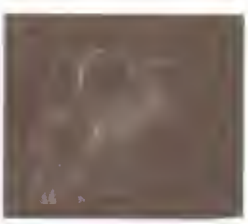
By sponsoring a fence post you will help to protect and conserve the Ngong Road Forest and educate a Child! ...And your name will appear on the Tag to be put on the Fence post

For more info email
davidson@africaonline.co.ke

Succulenta Apology

To all the folks who may have turned up at the Botanical Gardens on Saturday 10 May, for a Succulenta Meeting, only to find that there was no meeting, please accept a very sincere apology!

Trips continued from page 1



West Turkana Expedition

A Prehistory Club and Kenya Museum Society trip
28 June - 7 July 03

The western port of Loke Turkono hos yielded importont fossil ond culturol moteriol, moking o significont contribution to the understanding of the biologicol ond culturol evolution of hominids. This trip will provide o rare opportunity to visit mony poloeontologicol ond archaeologicol sites.

This is o 10-doy comping trip trovelling in o opensided truck. Accommodotion is in shored tents ond cost includes comping equipment, food, tronsport, guides, security ond comping fees. Bring your own sleeping bog, mosquito net, and water bottle, which con be refilled eoch night. Ploces ore very limited.
Cost: Ksh 30,000 per person
For more detoils contoct the KMS ot 3750136 or info@KenyoMuseumSociety.org

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calibrated against observations of the number of wildebeest and lions in the period 1960-1999.

The developments in Kenya, acting together with likely climate change, are predicted to have a severe impact on the number of migrating wildebeest in the Serengeti ecosystem when a drought occurs. A drought is a common, expected occurrence in the Serengeti; historically a drought occurs about every seven years, and a severe drought occurs every twenty years or so. Following these developments, during a drought, 20% to 80% af the migrating wildebeest may die, according to the severity and duration of the drought. With a 50% die-off, it may take twenty years for the wildebeest population to recover. With an 80% die-off there may be no recovery of the wildebeest population.

A model sensitivity analysis was carried out and suggested that the predictions of a collapse of the wildebeest population are reliable, the uncertainties are probably 20%. The main reason for this reliability is that the proposed Mara River water extraction in Kenya would not leave enaugh water in a drought to satisfy the water consumption in the Serengeti ecosystem by (1) the animals drinking and (2) evaporation in the Mara River.

It is suggested that a Mara River transboundary management group needs to be established, where the governments of Kenya and Tanzania need to have equal voices. Any management plan must be compatible with ecohydrology principles for the sustainable use of the water resaurces by both countries.

Reference: **E. Gereta,** Tanzania National Parks, PO Box 3134, Arusha, Tanzania. E-mail: emmanuel_gereta@hotmail.com, **E. Wolanski** Australian Institute of Marine Science, PMB No. 3, Townsville MC, Queensland 4810, Australia. E-mail: e.wolanski@aims.gov.au, **M. Borner** Frankfurt Zoological Society, PO Box 14935, Arusha, Tanzania **and S. Serneels,** International Livestock Research Institute, PO Box 30709, Nairobi, Kenya

Full article published in *Ecohydrology & Hydrobiology,* vol. 2 (1-4), 127-134 and is available in PDF from office@naturekenya.org

NATURALISTS CORNER

BIRDS OF PREY

OWLS: *Wise or cursed?*

Hu-hu-hu, hu-hu-hu who are you? who are you?

That is a sound heard in the night. Most people are afraid of that sound. They say if it is heard, then someone in that village, or near where the cry came from, is going to die. Others say this village will face a disaster of some kind. It is an ill-omen. It is the owl.

The owl is also the great hunter of the night. Flying silently, eyes wide open and ears open to every sound in the silence of the night. Its hearing is so good that it hears even the slightest movement of mice in the bushes. Its sharp claws and curved beak are efficient weapons to catch its prey, radents and insects.

As owls hunt rats, mice and insects, which eat crops and carry diseases, they are helpful to people. Yet all aver the warld people dread the owl's strange cry. For many, it may be an expression of their own fears.

People hear owls when they are awake in the night taking care of the sick, keeping watch in battle or lying awake worrying about their own problems. Death may come with illness or wars. People therefore think of the owls' calls as announcements of death. No one likes the bringer of bad news. And so the fear of the owls' calls makes people think that the bird itself is cursed.

Not all cultures have the same beliefs. In some cultures, the owl is a symbol of wisdom. It is good to learn about the hopes and fears of our ancestors, and how different cultures express these thoughts through animals. The important ecological services owls and other raptors provide also should not be ignored. People who study wildlife learn from observations. An owl is neither wise nor cursed. It is just a bird.

From *Rainbow* magazine, courtesy of Fleur Ng'weno

Raptors at the Bird Table!

Hilary Garland

Bird tables are fashionable; from there, feeding birds can be admired, identified and recorded But the feeding activity of numerous small birds inevitably attracts the attention of raptors, which swoop down and grab a meal (that is, one of the small birds).

This seems to anger some people who are willing to take action against any raptor, which threatens their small birds, or paultry.

Naturally a raptor will be drawn to the bait of a bird table. Raptors (also known as birds af prey) are meat eaters and they have to eat to survive. The numbers of these magnificent 'Kings of the Air' are small and diminishing due to habitat loss and other environmental problems. Raptors are slow breeders whereas the small birds that are common at bird tables, breed fast, as do chickens, and can afford to lose a few of their kind to sustain a raptor.

Raptors need our protection and we need to help people understand their ecological role. One solution would be, to remove the bird table thereby taking temptation away from the raptor.

For more on raptors visit www.peregrinefund.org